

February 25, 2004

RE: Co-Sponsor the End Racial Profiling Act of 2004

Dear Representative:

We, the undersigned religious organizations, urge you to co-sponsor the End Racial Profiling Act of 2004 (ERPA).

Racial profiling occurs when law enforcement relies on race, ethnicity, national origin, or religion in selecting which individuals to subject to routine or spontaneous investigatory activities, *except* when characteristics are part of a specific suspect description.

Countless persons have suffered the humiliation of being stopped while driving, flying, working or even walking because of the color of their skin, ethnicity, religion or their national origin. In a survey by The Washington Post, The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation and Harvard University (June 2001), more than half of African American men, one-quarter of African American women and one in five Latino and Asian men reported that they have been the victims of racial profiling.

Both historical and present examples abound. This practice damages our democracy. It is a civil and human rights violation that breaches our nation's most basic constitutional standard of equality before the law. Both the President and the Attorney General have repeatedly and explicitly stated that the practice is wrong -- adversely affecting law enforcement -- and must be stopped.

For large portions of the public and communities of color, racial profiling perpetuates negative, wrongful and hurtful stereotypes regarding people of color and the plausible conclusion that the criminal justice system is greatly unfair. This undermines trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

Public safety is also put at jeopardy. Both counter-terrorism experts and other branches of law enforcement have indicated that racial profiling diverts attention away from suspicious behavior by someone who does not fit a racial profile. The ensuing harassment discourages individuals and groups to turn to law enforcement when they need to.

Most law enforcement officers perform their duties with integrity and respect for the people they serve. However, incidences of racial profiling have cast a pall over federal, state, and local law enforcement activities. Some states and local agencies have addressed this problem, others have not. Racial profiling cannot continue to be a widespread problem in this country. Federal legislation is necessary.

The End Racial Profiling Act draws upon Department of Justice guidance issued in June 2003. The guidance prohibits federal law enforcement officials from engaging in racial profiling. Setting a federal example and standard is a good initial step. ERPA would require the same behavior from state and local law enforcement. It includes means for enforcement of the new policy, requires data collection to monitor progress toward eliminating the problem, and provides incentive grants to state and local agencies that will encourage compliance.

Many of our religious traditions diligently work to create welcoming communities in which all people are treated fairly. Most people deeply desire this vision to become a reality. Everyone -- including authorities -- should work toward this end. No one should need to fear authority because of who he or she is. Each person is unique and respected because everyone is made in the image of God. We cannot sit idly and allow racial profiling to attack the human dignity and peaceable living everyone deserves. We again ask you to co-sponsor this important legislation.

To co-sponsor the End Racial Profiling Act of 2004, please contact Keenan Keller in Representative John Conyers' office, at (202) 225-6504. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact David Whettstone, Legislative Associate for Domestic Affairs at the Mennonite Central Committee Washington Office (202) 544-6564, x3. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

American Baptist Churches USA
The American Friends Service Committee, National Criminal Justice Program
The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the U.S.A. and Canada
Church of the Brethren Witness/Washington Office
The Episcopal Church, USA
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Friends Committee on National Legislation (Quaker)
General Board of Church and Society, The United Methodist Church
Mennonite Central Committee U.S., Washington Office
National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA
Presbyterian Church (USA) Washington Office
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
February 25, 2004

RE: Co-Sponsor the End Racial Profiling Act of 2004

Dear Senator:

We, the undersigned religious organizations, urge you to co-sponsor the End Racial Profiling Act of 2004 (ERPA).

Racial profiling occurs when law enforcement relies on race, ethnicity, national origin, or religion in selecting which individuals to subject to routine or spontaneous investigatory activities, *except* when characteristics are part of a specific suspect description.

Countless persons have suffered the humiliation of being stopped while driving, flying, working or even walking because of the color of their skin, ethnicity, religion or their national origin. In a survey by The Washington Post, The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation and Harvard University (June 2001), more than half of African American men, one-quarter of African American women and one in five Latino and Asian men reported that they have been the victims of racial profiling.

Both historical and present examples abound. This practice damages our democracy. It is a civil and human rights violation that breaches our nation's most basic constitutional standard of equality before the law. Both the President and the Attorney General have repeatedly and explicitly stated that the practice is wrong -- adversely affecting law enforcement -- and must be stopped.

For large portions of the public and communities of color, racial profiling perpetuates negative, wrongful and hurtful stereotypes regarding people of color and the plausible conclusion that the criminal justice system is greatly unfair. This undermines trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

Public safety is also put at jeopardy. Both counter-terrorism experts and other branches of law enforcement have indicated that racial profiling diverts attention away from suspicious behavior by someone who does not fit a racial profile. The ensuing harassment discourages individuals and groups to turn to law enforcement when they need to.

Most law enforcement officers perform their duties with integrity and respect for the people they serve. However, incidences of racial profiling have cast a pall over federal, state, and local law enforcement activities. Some states and local agencies have addressed this problem, others have not. Racial profiling cannot continue to be a widespread problem in this country. Federal legislation is necessary.

Page 2 - Co-Sponsor the End Racial Profiling Act of 2004

The End Racial Profiling Act draws upon Department of Justice guidance issued in June 2003. The guidance prohibits federal law enforcement officials from engaging in racial profiling. Setting a federal example and standard is a good initial step. ERPA would require the same behavior from state and local law enforcement. It includes means for enforcement of the new policy, requires data collection to monitor progress toward eliminating the problem, and provides incentive grants to state and local agencies that will encourage compliance.

Many of our religious traditions diligently work to create welcoming communities in which all people are treated fairly. Most people deeply desire this vision to become a reality. Everyone -- including authorities -- should work toward this end. No one should need to fear authority because of who he or she is. Each person is unique and respected because everyone is made in the image of God. We cannot sit idly and allow racial profiling to attack the human dignity and peaceable living everyone deserves. We again ask you to co-sponsor this important legislation.

To co-sponsor the End Racial Profiling Act of 2004, please contact Farhana Khera in Senator Russell Feingold's office, at (202) 224-5674. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact David Whettstone, Legislative Associate for Domestic Affairs at the Mennonite Central Committee Washington Office (202) 544-6564, x3. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

American Baptist Churches USA
The American Friends Service Committee, National Criminal Justice Program
The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the U.S.A. and Canada
Church of the Brethren Witness/Washington Office
The Episcopal Church, USA
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Friends Committee on National Legislation (Quaker)
General Board of Church and Society, The United Methodist Church
Mennonite Central Committee U.S., Washington Office
National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA
Presbyterian Church (USA) Washington Office
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries